

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5139

As Passed House - Amended:

April 15, 2005

Title: An act relating to highway and bridge tolling authority.

Brief Description: Modifying highway and bridge tolling authority.

Sponsors: By Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Haugen, Oke, Poulsen and Swecker).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 3/28/05, 3/31/05 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House - Amended: 4/15/05, 96-0.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill (As Amended by House)

- Repeals obsolete tolling and revenue bond statutes.
- Removes prohibitions on tolling specific bridges and highways.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 25 members: Representatives Murray, Chair; Wallace, Vice Chair; Woods, Ranking Minority Member; Appleton, Buck, Campbell, Curtis, Dickerson, Ericksen, Flannigan, Hankins, Hudgins, Jarrett, Kilmer, Lovick, Morris, Nixon, Rodne, Sells, Shabro, Simpson, B. Sullivan, Takko, Upthegrove and Wood.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Schindler.

Staff: Jeff Doyle (786-7322).

Background:

In 1937, the Washington Toll Bridge Authority was created by the Legislature with the full powers to finance, construct, and operate toll bridges. The legislation led to two initial toll financed projects: the Tacoma Narrows Bridge and the Lacey V. Murrow Memorial Bridge in Seattle, both of which opened to traffic in July 1940.

Between 1940 and 1965, 13 state bridges were built or repaired by using tolls as the debt service payment for construction bonds. The majority of toll facilities were constructed between the years of 1950 and 1965. With the exception of the current Tacoma Narrows Bridge project, the emergency reconstruction of the Hood Canal Bridge has been the sole toll facility constructed in the 40 years since 1965. All of the previously authorized toll bonds, including the emergency Hood Canal Bridge bonds, have been repaid and the tolls removed. Several of the bond authorizations stipulate that the bridges shall remain toll free after the date that the bonds have been fully paid and redeemed.

State law also contains legislative authorization for other toll roads and bridges that have not been undertaken and are not currently included in the State Transportation Plan. Examples of these authorizations include a limited access express highway from Tacoma to Everett and toll bridge from Lopez to San Juan Island.

The State Transportation Commission has broad authority to establish and construct toll facilities. Their authority is limited to those toll facilities that are specifically authorized by the Legislature, regional transportation investment district, city, town or county.

The Tacoma Narrows Bridge will be the next tolled facility in the state. An initial toll of \$3 will be collected when the new span opens in 2007. Toll rates will be set by the Washington State Transportation Commission in amounts sufficient to repay \$800 million in bond proceeds.

It is also anticipated that several other bridge reconstructions may be financed by tolls. Those facilities may include the State Route 520, Evergreen Point Floating Bridge (Rosellini Bridge), and the I-5 Columbia River Crossing, among others.

Summary of Amended Bill:

Statutory language relating to the approval of toll roads is clarified to indicate that the State Transportation Commission as the state toll authority imposes tolls and authorizes construction of toll roads.

Statutory provisions that relate to bond authorizations and other provisions on toll facilities that have been completed are repealed. Also repealed are authorizations for projects that have not been undertaken by the State Transportation Commission and where there is no current plan for those projects.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Tolls will be an important part of our transportation financing future. Clark county expects tolls to be part of the solution for a new I-5 Columbia River bridge.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Rick Wickman, Identity Clark County.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.